
5.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

State of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.6(a) states that an environmental impact report (EIR) shall describe and analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to a project. According to the Guidelines, these alternatives should feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, while avoiding or substantially lessening one or more of the significant environmental impacts of the project. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project, nor is it required to consider alternatives that are infeasible. The discussion of alternatives shall focus on those alternatives which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if they impede the attainment of the project objectives to some degree or would be more costly (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[b]).

When addressing feasibility, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 states that “among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, jurisdictional boundaries, and whether the applicant can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to alternative sites.” The CEQA Guidelines also specify that the alternatives discussion should not be remote or speculative; however, they need not be presented in the same level of detail as the assessment of the proposed project.

CEQA Guidelines indicate that several factors need to be considered in determining the range of alternatives to be analyzed in an EIR and the level of analytical detail that should be provided for each alternative. These factors include (1) the nature of the significant impacts of the proposed project; (2) the ability of alternatives to avoid or lessen the significant impacts associated with the project; (3) the ability of the alternatives to meet the objectives of the project; and (4) the feasibility of the alternatives. These factors would be unique for each project.

The significant environmental impacts of the project that the alternatives will seek to eliminate or reduce were determined and based upon the findings contained within each technical section evaluated in Sections 3.1 through 3.14 of this Draft EIR.

5.2 ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following alternatives were identified for examination and analysis in this Draft EIR:

Alternative 1 – No Project Alternative. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(1) requires that a No Project Alternative be analyzed. If the No Project Alternative were implemented, the proposed project would not be constructed and the site would remain in its current condition. This alternative was selected consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e).

Alternative 2 – Rural Estate Development. Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences consistent with the site’s existing General Plan land use designations and policy provisions. The development area under Alternative 2 is shown in **Figure 5.0-1**.

Alternative 3 – Reduced and Clustered Site Development. Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with a reduced density, clustered senior development consisting of the Village Center and Residential Nursing Care components of the proposed project. Development under Alternative 3 would be clustered on the northwest portion of the site as shown conceptually in **Figure 5.0-2**.

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Alternative 4 – Off-Site Alternative. Under Alternative 4, the proposed project would be developed on an alternate site in Nevada County. The alternate site consists of 43 acres within the Higgins Area Community Region boundary, located north of the project site along State Route (SR) 49. The alternative site is shown in **Figure 5.0-3**.

These alternatives constitute an adequate range of reasonable alternatives as required under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6. The environmental impacts of each of these alternatives are identified and compared with the potentially significant and significant impacts resulting from the proposed project. **Table 5.0-2** at the end of this section provides a summary of the comparisons. Also, an “environmentally superior” alternative is identified.

5.2 ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO PROJECT

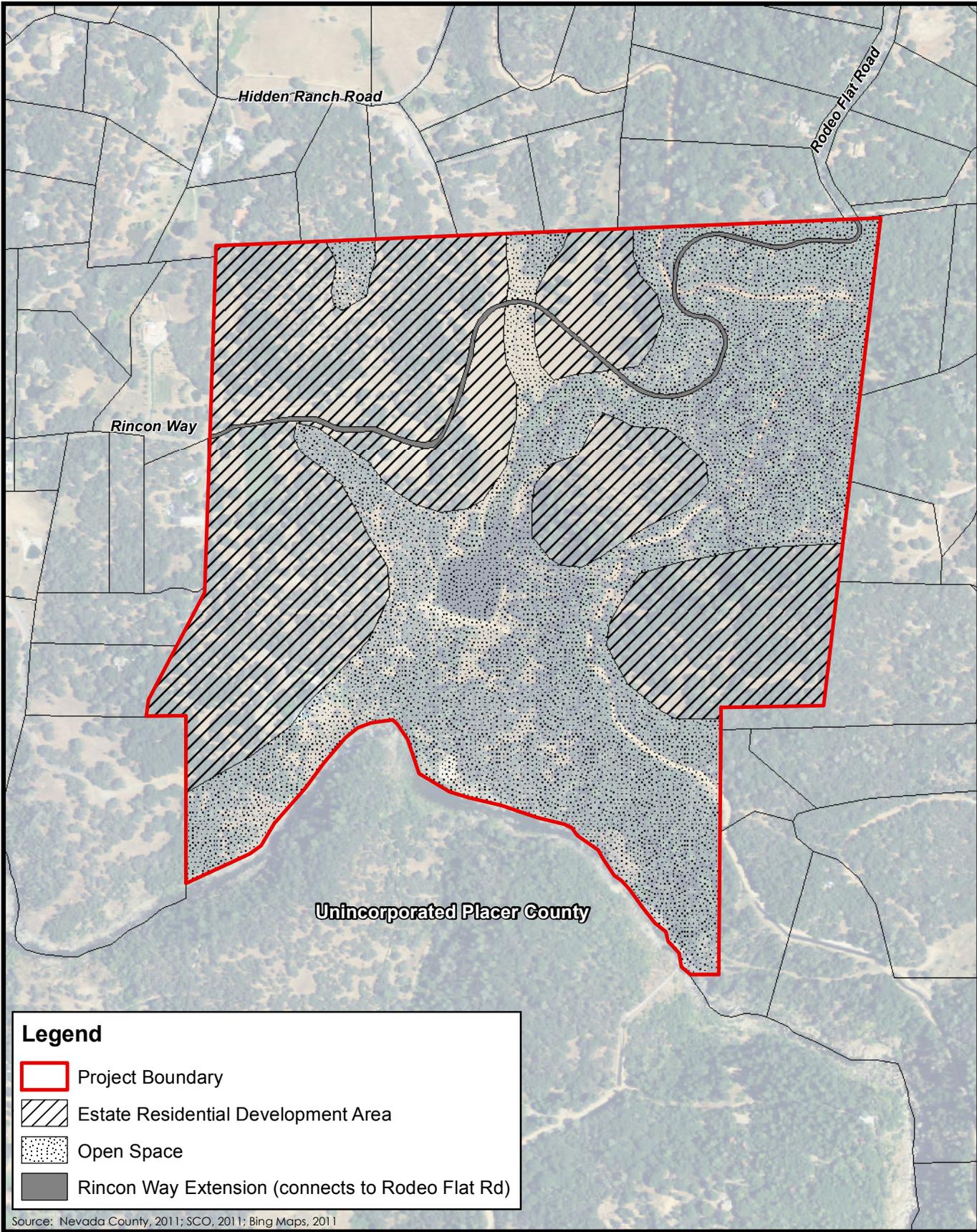
Alternative 1 is the No Project Alternative, which is required to be analyzed per CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(1). The purpose of describing and analyzing a No Project Alternative is to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving a proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(3)(B) states that if the project is a development project on identifiable property, the “no project” alternative is the circumstance under which the project does not proceed and the discussion would compare the environmental effects of the property remaining in its existing state against environmental effects which would occur if the project is approved. As such, discussion of the No Project Alternative contained herein compares the environmental effects of the project site remaining in its existing state against the environmental effects which would occur if the proposed project is approved. Alternative 2 provides an analysis of development of the site consistent with its current General Plan land use designations.

CHARACTERISTICS

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the project site would remain in its existing state as shown in **Figure 2.0-2** in Section 2.0, Project Description. No infrastructure improvements beyond those currently existing on or near the project site would be installed, and the existing land use designations for the project site would not be changed. In addition, the text amendments proposed to the County’s General Plan policies and Zoning Ordinance would not occur under the No Project Alternative.

The existing state of the project site is primarily undeveloped, with the exception of a 14,000-square-foot single-family residence constructed in 2001 and located on a bluff in the site’s southwestern corner overlooking the Bear River. Associated with this residence are auxiliary buildings, unpaved access roads, a garden area with raised planting beds, landscaping, and fencing. In addition, there is a golf driving range located at the northwestern corner of the site near its primary access point at Rincon Way. The range consists of a large, narrow grassy area and tall net fencing. Various types of fencing and gates, including livestock corrals, and unpaved access roads are also located throughout the site. An unnamed tributary flows into a 3.25-acre pond located near the center of the site center that is retained by an approximately 30-foot-tall earthen dam. In addition, segments of two Nevada Irrigation District (NID) irrigation canals traverse the site: the Weeks Canal crosses the northwestern portion of the site and the Magnolia Ditch crosses the eastern portion of the site. Portions of these canals are open and unlined while other segments are lined with gunite or are encased entirely and feature concrete and metal gates. The Bear River is located immediately south of the project site. The existing undeveloped three parcels of the site could each be developed with residential units under this alternative existing residence. This alternative would not meet any of the project objectives identified in Section 2.0 (Project Description).

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Legend

- Project Boundary
- Estate Residential Development Area
- Open Space
- Rincon Way Extension (connects to Rodeo Flat Rd)

Source: Nevada County, 2011; SCO, 2011; Bing Maps, 2011

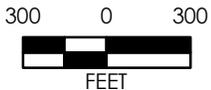
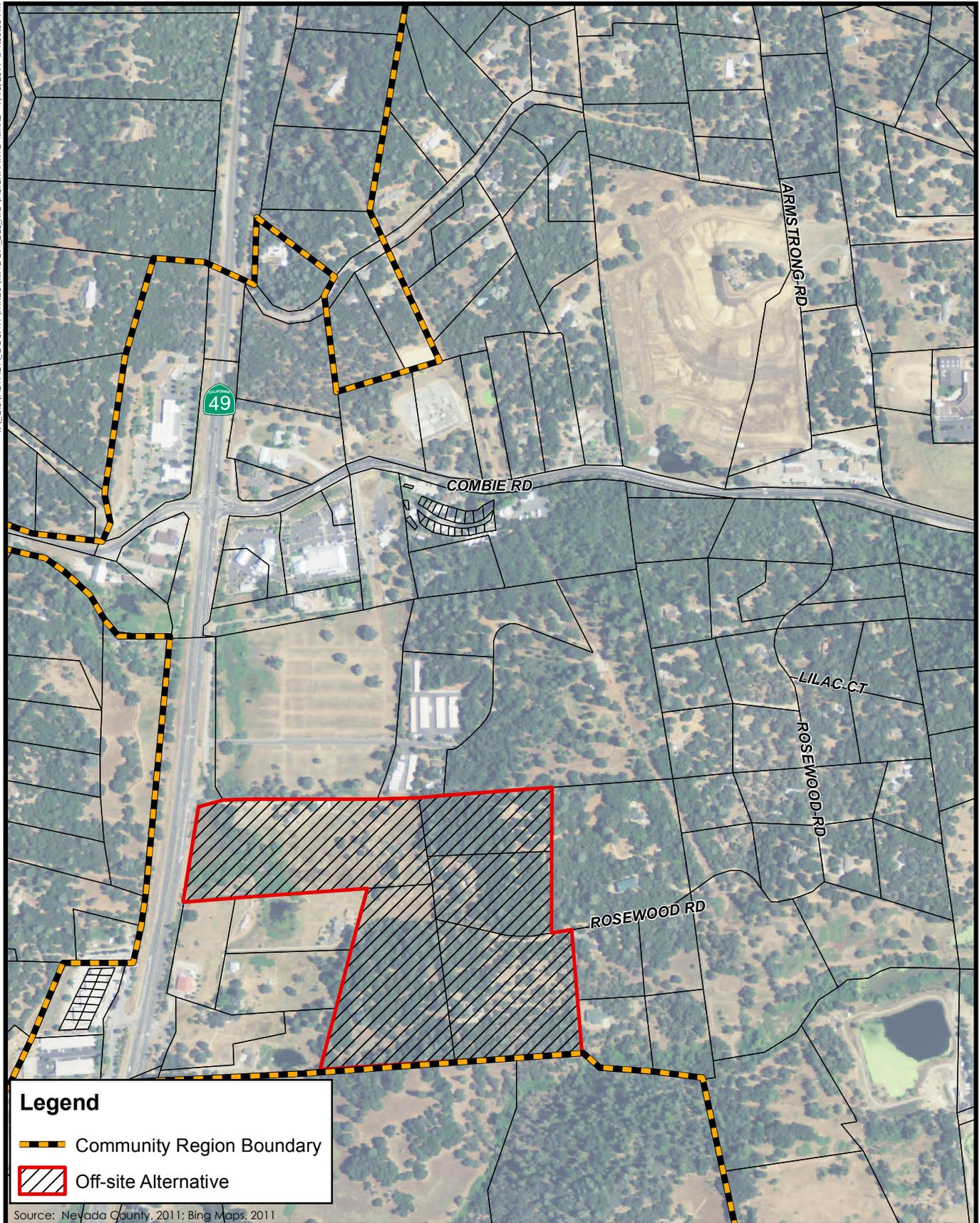


Figure 5.0-1
Alternative 2 - Rural Estate Development

FIGURE 5.0.-2 ALTERNATIVE 3 - REDUCED AND CLUSTERED SITE DEVELOPMENT



Source: Nevada County, 2011; Bing Maps, 2011

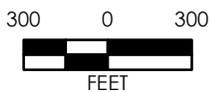


Figure 5.0-3
Alternative 4 - Off-site Alternative

COMPARATIVE IMPACTS

The following analysis is based on the significant environmental impacts identified in Sections 3.1 through 3.14. The reader is referred to these sections for further details on impacts associated with the proposed project.

Air Quality

Short-Term Construction-Generated Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Construction of the proposed project would generate short-term emissions of criteria air pollutants resulting from site grading and excavation, road paving, motor vehicle exhaust associated with construction equipment and worker trips, and the movement of construction equipment, especially on unpaved surfaces. Emissions of airborne particulate matter are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities. These short-term increases of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) could potentially contribute to existing nonattainment conditions in Nevada County. As a result, short-term increases of ROG and NO_x associated with the project would be considered **potentially significant**. In accordance with NSAQMD Rule 226 and proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.3.1a** through **MM 3.3.1d**, the project would be required to prepare a Dust Suppression Control Plan and an Off-Road Construction Equipment Emission Reduction Plan and employ the use of interior and exterior coatings that contain less than 250 grams of VOC/ROG. The DSCP would be required to identify construction schedules and project phases to be implemented, which would ensure that multiple project phases or construction activities would not occur simultaneously. Based on the proposed project phasing schedules, and with implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. There would be no site grading and excavation, road paving, or motor vehicle exhaust associated with construction equipment and worker trips until such time that residential home sites are proposed (no more than 3). Therefore, no substantial amount of construction-generated emissions of criteria air pollutants would occur and thus the No Project alternative would result in a less than significant impact.

Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Long-term operation of the proposed project would generate emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (i.e., ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ are projected to exceed the NSAQMD's Level A significance threshold. According to NSAQMD guidance, emissions exceeding the Level A significance threshold would contribute to existing nonattainment conditions and may also interfere with the region's ability to maintain ambient air quality standards if no mitigation is implemented. This impact would be considered **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.3.3** would require preparation of an emissions reduction plan to include NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures. Implementation of NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures would result in substantial reductions in project-generated emissions and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would remain in its existing state as described above. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ associated with the existing 14,000-square-foot single-family residence on the site, as well as emissions associated with the potential 3 other residential

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home sites, would be substantially less than those associated with operation of the proposed project.

Contribution to Cumulative Regional Air Quality Conditions

Long-term operation of the proposed project, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, would contribute to cumulative increases in emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀ that could contribute to future concentrations of ozone and PM₁₀, for which the region is currently designated nonattainment. Increases in project-related emissions, though considered less than significant at the project level, could on a cumulative basis contribute to existing nonattainment conditions. As a result, this impact would be considered **cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the project site would remain in its existing state. No increase in emissions would occur and no additional contribution to cumulative regional air quality conditions would occur beyond the insubstantial amount associated with the potential 3 additional residential home sites.

Biological Resources

Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on special-status plant species. Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct mortality or the loss of habitat for these species if they are present within the project footprint. The project could result in indirect effects to these species if present in areas surrounding the project footprint through gradual habitat degradation associated with the introduction of non-native plant species and increased human presence. These are **potentially significant** impacts. Impacts could be minimized through implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists.. Given the potential for 3 additional residential home sites, no substantial amount ground disturbance would occur on the project site in comparison with the proposed project and direct or indirect impacts to special-status plant species would be substantially reduced.

Impacts to Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct and indirect loss of habitat and individuals of endangered, threatened, rare, proposed, or candidate status, and California fully protected species (special-status species). This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.4.2a** through **MM 3.4.2e** would reduce impacts to listed special-status species to a **less than significant** level by requiring pre-construction surveys, general avoidance and minimization measures, a worker environmental awareness program, and an outdoor illumination plan.

Refer to the discussion under "Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species" above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of ground disturbance would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project.

Impacts to Non-Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in impacts to species of special concern, migratory birds protected under the MBTA, and other non-listed special-status species (non-listed special-status species). This is a **potentially significant** impact. With implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.3a** and **MM 3.4.3b**, which require preconstruction surveys, focused surveys, and leaving identified species undisturbed, impacts would be reduced to **less than significant**.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of ground disturbance would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project.

Impacts to Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands

Although a formal wetland delineation has not been conducted, potentially jurisdictional features have been mapped on the project site. All the wetland features mapped on the project site are assumed to be considered jurisdictional by the USACE (including potentially isolated seasonal wetlands). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in the loss of approximately 0.8 acres of jurisdictional waters and wetlands, which is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.4** would reduce impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. to a **less than significant** level by requiring a formal wetland delineation and by the requiring the applicant to ensure that the project will result in no net loss of waters of the U.S. by providing mitigation through impact avoidance, impact minimization, and/or compensatory mitigation for the impact.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of ground disturbance would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project.

Impacts to Protected Landmark Oak Trees and Groves

The project will result in construction within the limits of some areas of landmark oak grove (canopy cover greater than 33 percent). The estimated area of impact of the proposed project on landmark oak groves is approximately 1.35 acre of the total of 39.9 acres of landmark oak groves that occur within the project site. The CEQA Guidelines do not address this resource, but the Nevada County General Plan determined that direct impacts within the limits of such oak woodlands constitute a significant impact. Therefore, this is considered to be a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.4.6**, which requires preparation and implementation of a Habitat Management Plan, would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of ground disturbance or tree removal would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project.

Impacts to Sensitive Biological Communities

Implementation of the proposed project may result in the disturbance, degradation, and/or removal of other sensitive biological communities, including the indirect degradation of riparian and wetland habitat values due to sedimentation and/or disturbance of wildlife habitat during construction or during project operation. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation

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of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.6** (Habitat Management Plan), **MM 3.4.2e** (general avoidance and minimization measures), **MM 3.4.4** (mitigation for jurisdictional waters), and **MM 3.4.7** (Habitat Management Plan) would reduce impacts to sensitive habitats to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of construction activities or ground disturbance would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project.

Hazardous Wildlife Interactions

Given that most of the trails wind through the undeveloped portions of the site, there is the potential for interactions between trail users and rattlesnakes. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.10** would ensure that trail users would be aware of the precautions necessary to prevent rattlesnake bites. Therefore, impacts would be reduced a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. The existing trails on the project site, along with existing project site residents and potential future residents associated with the allowable 3 additional residential home site under current land use designations would still be exposed to interactions with rattlesnakes; however, exposure to this existing hazard would not increase substantially in comparison to the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

For each future project requiring mitigation, site-specific measures (mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**) would reduce project-level impacts to plant species and their habitats. The incremental impacts of the project, when viewed in connection with effects on biological resources associated with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable development projects in the region, would be mitigated to **less than cumulatively considerable**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. Therefore, the project site would largely remain in its existing state with no substantial ground disturbance in comparison to the proposed project. Therefore, no significant incremental contribution to regional effects on biological resources would occur. As such, this impact would be largely avoided in comparison to the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species and Sensitive Habitats

Development of the project location, in addition to anticipated cumulative development in the project vicinity, would result in disturbance to special-status wildlife species and sensitive habitats throughout the region. These impacts would be considered **cumulatively considerable**. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.1** through **MM 3.4.7** would reduce the project’s overall contribution to cumulative biological resource impacts resulting from completion of the project to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no significant incremental contribution to regional effects on

biological resources would occur. As such, this impact would be largely avoided in comparison to the proposed project.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

AB 32 Compliance and GHG Emissions

Implementation of the proposed project would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions that would conflict with the goals of AB 32 or result in a significant impact on the environment. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**. The BMPs stipulated under mitigation measure **MM 3.3.1a** in conjunction with mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1a**, which requires submittal of a Construction Recycling Plan (CRP) with the goal of recycling at least 50 percent of construction waste or demolition materials, will reduce construction-based impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** impact. Mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1b**, which requires energy-efficient building measures, in conjunction with state regulations, would reduce emissions. However, the GHG emissions for buildout yield a metric ton per service population ratio would exceed the BAAQMD threshold of 4.6, the proposed project would result in a net increase in cumulative GHG emissions. The proposed project's contribution to GHGs is thus considered **cumulatively considerable** and is a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would remain in its existing state and described above, the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not generate any new or increased GHG emissions beyond that associated with 3 residential home site, which is greatly less in comparison to the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources

The project site is considered highly sensitive for prehistoric, ethnohistoric, and historic-era cultural resources. Implementation of the proposed project could result in the potential disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric archaeological sites, historical archaeological sites, and isolated artifacts and features) and human remains. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.6.1a** and **MM 3.6.1b** would ensure that any cultural resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in prehistoric or historical archaeology. Therefore, impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. Given the potential for 3 additional residential home sites under current land use designations, no substantial amount ground disturbance would occur on the project site in comparison with the proposed project. Therefore, this impact would be largely avoided.

Impact Unique Paleontological Resources

It is possible that project-related ground-disturbing activities could uncover previously unknown paleontological resources within project boundaries. Unanticipated and accidental

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paleontological discoveries during project implementation have the potential to affect significant paleontological resources. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.6.2** would ensure that any paleontological resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified paleontologist. Impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of ground disturbance would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains

Implementation of the proposed project, along with other cumulative development in Nevada County, could contribute to the cumulative loss and/or disturbance of cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated artifacts and features), and human remains. This contribution could be cumulatively considerable prior to mitigation. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.6.2a** and **MM 3.6.2b**, and adherence to Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, PRC Section 5097.98, and CCR Section 15064.5(e), will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the proposed project’s contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, no further ground disturbance would occur on the site beyond the potential construction of 3 residential home sites. Although proposed mitigation would reduce project impacts, the No Project Alternative would avoid any contribution to cumulative impacts to a much greater extent than the proposed project as the ground disturbance associated with the potential for 3 residential home sites would be much less in comparison to the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Paleontological Resources

Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with cumulative development in the surrounding region, would increase the potential to disturb known and undiscovered paleontological resources in the region. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.6.3** will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the project’s contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains” above. Under the No Project Alternative, no substantial amount of ground disturbance would occur on the project site and this impact would be substantially minimized in comparison to the proposed project as the ground disturbance associated with the potential for 3 residential home sites would be less in comparison to the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Human Health

Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project would result in increased population (a maximum of 415 residents in 345 housing units) on the project site and thus would increase exposure of people and structures to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires originating off-site and spreading to the project site. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Compliance with the California Building

Standards Code, the defensible space requirements included in the Public Resources Code, and all applicable Nevada County Code requirements would ensure that the proposed project would provide the necessary minimum wildfire protection standards to minimize safety effects of being located in the SRA. However, regardless of these existing regulations, the project site is still located in an area with a high potential to be affected by a wildland fire at some point in the future, and the proposed project would increase population and structures in the area. Mitigation measure MM 3.8.7 mitigates this impact to **less than significant**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. Given the potential for 3 additional residential home sites, the No Project Alternative would not substantially increase population and structures in the area and wildland fire hazards would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project.

Cumulative Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project, in combination with other urban development in the CAL FIRE Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit (NEU Unit) service area, would result in cumulative development of homes and personal property, which makes wildfire suppression more difficult and leads to increased hazards. As such, impacts associated with wildland fire hazards are considered to be **cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable**.

Refer to the discussion under "Wildland Fire Hazards" above. Given the potential for 3 additional residential home sites, the No Project Alternative would not substantially increase population and structures in the cumulative setting (NEU Unit service area and wildland fire hazards would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project.

Noise

Construction Noise

Construction activities could result in a substantial temporary increase in ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses, which may result in increased levels of annoyance, activity interference, and sleep disruption. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.11.1** would limit construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day, require the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and provide contact information for construction activities and would reduce noise-generating construction activities to **less than significant**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. No significant construction-generated noise would occur in association with the potential to construct 3 additional residential home sites and thus a less impact would occur.

Exposure to Non-Transportation Source Noise

Operation of the proposed project, including occupancy of the residential units, would include on-site activities and the operation of stationary equipment that would result in increases in ambient noise levels that could exceed applicable County noise standards at nearby on- and off-site noise-sensitive receptors. Per mitigation measure **MM 3.11.3**, major noise-generating sources, including the proposed sewer pump stations (one proposed and one optional), automotive and tractor repair barns, and building equipment, would be designed to ensure

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compliance with County noise standards. Proposed residential dwelling units would also be required to comply with California Title 24 noise insulation standards of 45 dBA CNEL for habitable rooms. With mitigation, operational noise levels would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would remain in its existing state and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists as described above. Noise associated with the existing 14,000-square-foot single-family residence on the site, as well as the noise associated with the potential 3 additional residential home site, would be substantially less than noise associated with operation of the proposed project.

Population, Housing, and Employment

Induce Population, Housing, and Employment Growth

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the addition of a maximum of 415 residents, 345 housing units, and 43 employees to the project site. The project, as proposed, would increase the allowable density on the project site by 136 percent and result in greater general intensity of use than would be allowed under the current Nevada County General Plan designation. This impact would be **less than significant**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and no additional residents, housing units, or employees would be generated as a result. The development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists. The No Project Alternative would not exceed the density allowed under the current Nevada County General Plan designation. Therefore, this impact would be better under the No Project Alternative than under the proposed project. However, it should be noted that the proposed project would employ up to 43 employees, thus increasing employment opportunities in Nevada County, which currently has an unemployment rate of 11.4 percent. The No Project Alternative would not generate new employment opportunities for the county.

Public Services and Utilities

Impacts to Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Implementation of the proposed project will result in the need for additional or expanded fire protection facilities and could result in decreased fire protection service levels. This impact is considered **less than significant**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the need for additional or expanded fire protection facilities would not occur.

Water Supply and Conveyance Facilities

No timing and enforcement mechanism is currently in place that would ensure the timing related to the design and construction of the project's water distribution system to ensure delivery of water to the proposed project. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.13.4.2** establishes the timing of water system improvements and ensures that the project's impacts to water supply and conveyance facilities are **less than significant**.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and water system improvements would not be required.

Wastewater Treatment Impacts

The Lake of the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) currently serves approximately 2,810 connected, standby, and committed EDUs. Including the proposed project's 280 EDUs, there is a potential for an additional 590 EDUs for planned future projects. The WWTP is currently designed to handle 2,707 EDUs. Therefore, wastewater capacity has been already been reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. This impact is therefore considered **potentially significant**. Mitigation measure **MM 3.13.5.1** requires the applicant to fund the project's fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, proposed project would not be constructed and additional capacity at the Lake of the Pines WWTP would not be required.

Solid Waste Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project would generate additional 2,580 daily pounds of solid waste. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.13.6.1**, as well as compliance with AB 939, would reduce solid waste impacts resulting from the project to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project to subscribe to waste collection and recycling services, as well as recycling programs, provided by the County's franchised waste collection company and by requiring the project to provide adequate space for waste and recycling containers.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and no further solid waste would be generated on the site, beyond that associated with the future potential of 3 residential home sites, which would be insubstantial.

Traffic and Circulation

Traffic Hazards – Sight Distance and Collisions

Implementation of the proposed project could result in increased hazards associated with sight distance along Rincon Way. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Mitigation measures **MM 3.14.4a** and **MM 3.14.4b** would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project applicant to be responsible for the entire cost of restriping Rincon Way at SR 49 and for reevaluating the sight distance standards if the project will modify the Rincon Way/Connie Court intersection.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed. The existing hazards on Rincon Way would not be exacerbated under the potential development associated with 3 residential home sites.

Adequate Emergency Access

The proposed project would provide adequate emergency access; however, emergency access via Rodeo Flat Road would not be locked. This impact would be **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.14.5** would clearly identify the gated connection as emergency access and would ensure that the gate would remain closed except during

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emergencies and would reduce impacts associated with emergency access to a **less than significant** level.

Under the No Project Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed and the development potential would consist of 3 additional residential home sites in addition to the one that currently exists as described above. As there is currently only one evacuation route out of the Ranchos/Combie Road corridor area, implementation of the proposed project would improve emergency access to the entire Ranchos/Combie Road corridor area by providing an additional emergency-only roadway connection that would offer a greater number of emergency access options for the mobility of fire suppression, emergency response, and law enforcement vehicles during an emergency. As such, this potentially significant impact would be worse under the No Project Alternative than under the proposed project.

5.3 ALTERNATIVE 2 – RURAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

CHARACTERISTICS

The project site is currently designated by the Nevada County General Plan as Planned Development, Estate (PD-EST) and zoned RA-3-PD (Residential Agricultural, 3-acre, Planned Development). The PD-EST allows up to 72 dwelling units on the project site (215 acres/3 acres for each dwelling unit = 71.6 dwelling units).

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences consistent with the site's existing land use designations. As provided for under General Plan Policies 1.5(t), Planned Development, and 1.18, Clustering, minimum parcel sizes can be modified in order to avoid sensitive environmental resources. Thus, Alternative 2 would include the maximum development allowed under the Estate designation (72 single-family residences), but not all parcels would meet the 3-acre minimum. The development area under Alternative 2 is conceptually visualized in **Figure 5.0-1**.

In addition to the single-family residences, implementation of Alternative 2 would also require the construction of internal circulation and utility systems including roadways, drainage facilities, and water and wastewater pipelines extensions similar to the proposed project. Primary access to the project site would be provided via Rincon Way, which would be extended to Rodeo Flat Road as a full access roadway as shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. This alternative would not meet any of the project objectives identified in Section 2.0 (Project Description).

COMPARATIVE IMPACTS

The following analysis is based on the significant environmental impacts identified in Sections 3.1 through 3.14. The reader is referred to these sections for further details on impacts associated with the proposed project.

Air Quality

Short-Term Construction-Generated Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Construction of the proposed project would generate short-term emissions of criteria air pollutants resulting from site grading and excavation, road paving, motor vehicle exhaust associated with construction equipment and worker trips, and the movement of construction

equipment, especially on unpaved surfaces. Emissions of airborne particulate matter are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities. These short-term increases of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) could potentially contribute to existing nonattainment conditions in Nevada County. As a result, short-term increases of ROG and NO_x associated with the project would be considered **potentially significant**. In accordance with NSAQMD Rule 226 and proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.3.1a** through **MM 3.3.1d**, the project would be required to prepare a Dust Suppression Control Plan and an Off-Road Construction Equipment Emission Reduction Plan and employ the use of interior and exterior coatings that contain less than 250 grams of VOC/ROG. The DSCP would be required to identify construction schedules and project phases to be implemented, which would ensure that multiple project phases or construction activities would not occur simultaneously. Based on the proposed project phasing schedules, and with implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Construction-related emissions of airborne particulate matter are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities. Although the overall density of development under Alternative 2 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, development would not be clustered on one portion of the site. Instead, single-family residences would be spread throughout the site on individual lots. Given the topography of the project site, Alternative 2 would be expected to increase the amount of site grading and excavation that would be needed for development of residences, roadways, and other infrastructure. Impacts under Alternative 2 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project; however, given the increase in construction-related increases of ROG and NO_x, this potentially significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Long-term operation of the proposed project would generate emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (i.e., ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ are projected to exceed the NSAQMD's Level A significance threshold. According to NSAQMD guidance, emissions exceeding the Level A significance threshold would contribute to existing nonattainment conditions and may also interfere with the region's ability to maintain ambient air quality standards if no mitigation is implemented. This impact would be considered **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.3.3** would require preparation of an emissions reduction plan to include NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures. Implementation of NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures would result in substantial reductions in project-generated emissions and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ associated with operation of this alternative would be substantially less than those associated with operation of the proposed project, given that 72 single-family residences would generate less traffic and have fewer wood-stationary air pollutant sources than the proposed 345-unit CCRC. Furthermore, impacts under Alternative 2 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project in order to further reduce operational emissions. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

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Contribution to Cumulative Regional Air Quality Conditions

Long-term operation of the proposed project, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, would contribute to cumulative increases in emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀ that could contribute to future concentrations of ozone and PM₁₀, for which the region is currently designated nonattainment. Increases in project-related emissions, though considered less than significant at the project level, could on a cumulative basis contribute to existing nonattainment conditions. As a result, this impact would be considered **cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable**.

Although emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ associated with operation of Alternative 2 would be less than those associated with operation of the proposed project as discussed under "Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants" above, emissions associated with Alternative 2 would still contribute cumulatively to existing nonattainment conditions in the Mountain Counties Air Basin.

Biological Resources

Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on special-status plant species. Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct mortality or the loss of habitat for these species if they are present within the project footprint. The project could result in indirect effects to these species if present in areas surrounding the project footprint through gradual habitat degradation associated with the introduction of non-native plant species and increased human presence. These are **potentially significant** impacts. Impacts could be minimized through implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**.

Under the proposed project, approximately 77 percent, or 167 acres (163 acres open space + 4 acres agricultural uses), of the site would remain undeveloped, with development clustered in the western part of the project site. Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences on approximately half of the project site as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Although the overall density of development under Alternative 2 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, development would be spread throughout the site on individual lots, resulting in a reduction in overall open space on the site and more extension of development into the eastern part of the project site where more valuable biological habitat resources are located. Although impacts under Alternative 2 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project, the direct mortality and loss of habitat associated with development and ground disturbance on the entirety of the project site would be substantially increased in comparison to a clustered development site design. Therefore, this significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct and indirect loss of habitat and individuals of endangered, threatened, rare, proposed, or candidate status, and California fully protected species (special-status species). This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.4.2a** through **MM 3.4.2e** would reduce impacts to listed special-status species to a **less than significant** level by requiring pre-construction surveys, general avoidance and minimization measures, a worker environmental awareness program, and an outdoor illumination plan.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to special-status species associated with spreading development throughout the site under Alternative 2 would be substantially increased in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Non-Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in impacts to species of special concern, migratory birds protected under the MBTA, and other non-listed special-status species (non-listed special-status species). This is a **potentially significant** impact. With implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.3a** and **MM 3.4.3b**, which require preconstruction surveys, focused surveys, and leaving identified species undisturbed, impacts would be reduced to **less than significant**.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to non-listed special-status species associated with spreading development throughout the site under Alternative 2 would be substantially increased in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands

Although a formal wetland delineation has not been conducted, potentially jurisdictional features have been mapped on the project site. All the wetland features mapped on the project site are assumed to be considered jurisdictional by the USACE (including potentially isolated seasonal wetlands). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in the loss of approximately 0.8 acres of jurisdictional waters and wetlands, which is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.4** would reduce impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. to a **less than significant** level by requiring a formal wetland delineation and by the requiring the applicant to ensure that the project will result in no net loss of waters of the U.S. by providing mitigation through impact avoidance, impact minimization, and/or compensatory mitigation for the impact.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. associated with spreading development throughout the site under Alternative 2 would be substantially increased in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Protected Landmark Oak Trees and Groves

The project will result in construction within the limits of some areas of landmark oak grove (canopy cover greater than 33 percent). The estimated area of impact of the proposed project on landmark oak groves is approximately 1.35 acre of the total of 39.9 acres of landmark oak groves that occur within the project site. The CEQA Guidelines do not address this resource, but the Nevada County General Plan determined that direct impacts within the limits of such oak woodlands constitute a significant impact. Therefore, this is considered to be a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.4.6**, which requires preparation and implementation of a Habitat Management Plan, would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

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Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Development of the project site with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1** under Alternative 2 could result in the removal of considerably more landmark oak trees/groves in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Sensitive Biological Communities

Implementation of the proposed project may result in the disturbance, degradation, and/or removal of other sensitive biological communities, including the indirect degradation of riparian and wetland habitat values due to sedimentation and/or disturbance of wildlife habitat during construction or during project operation. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.6** (Habitat Management Plan), **MM 3.4.2e** (general avoidance and minimization measures), **MM 3.4.4** (mitigation for jurisdictional waters), and **MM 3.4.7** (Habitat Management Plan) would reduce impacts to sensitive habitats to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to riparian and wetland habitat associated with spreading development throughout the site under Alternative 2 would be substantially increased in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Hazardous Wildlife Interactions

Given that most of the trails wind through the undeveloped portions of the site, there is the potential for interactions between trail users and rattlesnakes. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.10** would ensure that trail users would be aware of the precautions necessary to prevent rattlesnake bites. Therefore, impacts would be reduced a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Most rattlesnakes forage for prey in or near brushy or tall grass areas, rock outcrops, rodent burrows, around and under surface objects, and sometimes in the open. Alternative 2 would expose fewer residents to this hazard and would result in better impacts than the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

For each future project requiring mitigation, site-specific measures (mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**) would reduce project-level impacts to plant species and their habitats. The incremental impacts of the project, when viewed in connection with effects on biological resources associated with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable development projects in the region, would be mitigated to **less than cumulatively considerable**.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Although the overall density of development under Alternative 2 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, development would be spread throughout the site on individual lots, resulting in a reduction in overall open space on the site and more extension of development into the eastern part of the project site where more valuable biological habitat resources are located. Although impacts under Alternative 2 could

be mitigated similar to the proposed project, the contribution to cumulative impacts to special-status plant species associated with spreading development throughout the site under Alternative 2 would be substantially increased in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species and Sensitive Habitats

Development of the project location, in addition to anticipated cumulative development in the project vicinity, would result in disturbance to special-status wildlife species and sensitive habitats throughout the region. These impacts would be considered **cumulatively considerable**. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.1** through **MM 3.4.7** would reduce the project's overall contribution to cumulative biological resource impacts resulting from completion of the project to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species" above. The contribution to cumulative impacts to special-status wildlife species and sensitive habitats associated with spreading development throughout the site under Alternative 2 would be substantially increased in comparison to the clustered development site design of the proposed project. Therefore, this significant impact would be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

AB 32 Compliance and GHG Emissions

Implementation of the proposed project would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions that would conflict with the goals of AB 32 or result in a significant impact on the environment. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**. The BMPs stipulated under mitigation measure **MM 3.3.1a** in conjunction with mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1a**, which requires submittal a Construction Recycling Plan (CRP) with the goal of recycling at least 50 percent of construction waste or demolition materials, will reduce construction-based impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** impact. Mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1b**, which requires energy-efficient building measures, in conjunction with state regulations, would reduce emissions. However, the GHG emissions for buildout yield a metric ton per service population ratio would exceed the BAAQMD threshold of 4.6, the proposed project would result in a net increase in cumulative GHG emissions. The proposed project's contribution to GHGs is thus considered **cumulatively considerable** and is a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**, which would also result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Impacts under Alternative 2 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project, and any development on the site would at minimum meet the California Building Energy Efficiency Standards. Furthermore, greenhouse gas emissions associated with this alternative would be substantially less than those associated with operation of the proposed project, as 72 single-family residences would generate less traffic, use less electricity and gas, and generate less solid waste than the proposed CCRC development. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

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Cultural Resources

Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources

The project site is considered highly sensitive for prehistoric, ethnohistoric, and historic-era cultural resources. Implementation of the proposed project could result in the potential disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric archaeological sites, historical archaeological sites, and isolated artifacts and features) and human remains. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.6.1a** and **MM 3.6.1b** would ensure that any cultural resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in prehistoric or historical archaeology. Therefore, impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Although the overall density of development under Alternative 2 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, development would be spread throughout the site on individual lots, resulting in increased potential for disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources. These impacts could be mitigated similar to the proposed project; however, this potentially significant impact would still be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project given the increased ground disturbance.

Impact Unique Paleontological Resources

It is possible that project-related ground-disturbing activities could uncover previously unknown paleontological resources within project boundaries. Unanticipated and accidental paleontological discoveries during project implementation have the potential to affect significant paleontological resources. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.6.2** would ensure that any paleontological resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified paleontologist. Impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources" above. Alternative 2 would result in increased potential for unanticipated and accidental paleontological discoveries. These impacts could be mitigated similar to the proposed project; however, this potentially significant impact would still be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project given the increased ground disturbance.

Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains

Implementation of the proposed project, along with other cumulative development in Nevada County, could contribute to the cumulative loss and/or disturbance of cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated artifacts and features), and human remains. This contribution could be cumulatively considerable prior to mitigation. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.6.2a** and **MM 3.6.2b**, and adherence to Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, PRC Section 5097.98, and CCR Section 15064.5(e), will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the proposed project's contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Under Alternative 2, the overall density of development would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, but development would be spread throughout the site on individual lots, resulting in increased potential for disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources. Even after mitigation, impacts under Alternative 2 would contribute to the cumulative loss and/or disturbance of cultural resources to a greater degree than under the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be worse under the Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Paleontological Resources

Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with cumulative development in the surrounding region, would increase the potential to disturb known and undiscovered paleontological resources in the region. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.6.3** will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the project's contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains" above. Alternative 2 would result in increased potential for unanticipated and accidental paleontological discoveries. These impacts could be mitigated similar to the proposed project; however, contributions to this potentially significant cumulative impact would still be worse under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project given the increased ground disturbance.

Hazardous Materials/Human Health

Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project would result in increased population (a maximum of 15 residents in 345 housing units) on the project site and thus would increase exposure of people and structures to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires originating off-site and spreading to the project site. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Compliance with the California Building Standards Code, the defensible space requirements included in the Public Resources Code, and all applicable Nevada County Code requirements would ensure that the proposed project would provide the necessary minimum wildfire protection standards to minimize safety effects of being located in the SRA. However, regardless of these existing regulations, the project site is still located in an area with a high potential to be affected by a wildland fire at some point in the future, and the proposed project would increase population and structures in the area. Mitigation measure MM 3.8.7 mitigates this impact to **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. These residences would be required to comply with the California Building Standards Code, the defensible space requirements included in the Public Resources Code, and all applicable Nevada County Code requirements, similar to the proposed project. Although the overall density of development under Alternative 2 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, additional population and structures would still be introduced into the area and not clustered. Therefore, this impact would be similar under Alternative 2 and the proposed project.

Cumulative Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project, in combination with other urban development in the CAL FIRE Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit (NEU Unit) service area, would result in cumulative development of homes and

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personal property, which makes wildfire suppression more difficult and leads to increased hazards. As such, impacts associated with wildland fire hazards are considered to be **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

Development under Alternative 2 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project; however, it would still contribute to increased urban development in the NEU Unit service area, which in turn would make wildfire suppression more difficult and lead to increased hazards. Therefore, this significant impact would be similar under Alternative 2 and the proposed project.

Noise

Construction Noise

Construction activities could result in a substantial temporary increase in ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses, which may result in increased levels of annoyance, activity interference, and sleep disruption. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.11.1** would limit construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day, require the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and provide contact information for construction activities and would reduce noise-generating construction activities to **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Development of a rural residential neighborhood would increase in ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses similar to the proposed project. These impacts could also be mitigated similar to the proposed project, by limiting construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day and by requiring the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and by providing contact information for construction activities. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 2 and the proposed project.

Exposure to Non-Transportation Source Noise

Operation of the proposed project, including occupancy of the residential units, would include on-site activities and the operation of stationary equipment that would result in increases in ambient noise levels that could exceed applicable County noise standards at nearby on- and off-site noise-sensitive receptors. Per mitigation measure **MM 3.11.3**, major noise-generating sources, including the proposed sewer pump stations (one proposed and one optional), automotive and tractor repair barns, and building equipment, would be designed to ensure compliance with County noise standards. Proposed residential dwelling units would also be required to comply with California Title 24 noise insulation standards of 45 dBA CNEL for habitable rooms. With mitigation, operational noise levels would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-1**. Noise-generating activities and noise sources under Alternative 2 would include on-site landscape maintenance, occasional waste collection activities, and air and water circulation systems (e.g., heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, and boilers). In addition to these noise-generating activities, the proposed project would include stationary equipment that would result in increases in ambient noise levels, including an on-site sewer lift station (and possibly an intermediate lift station), on-site agricultural uses, on-site automotive and tractor repair barns, and on-site recreational activities (tennis courts, volleyball courts, bocce ball courts, pickleball courts, and swimming pools). Furthermore,

building mechanical equipment intended to serve larger on-site structures included in the proposed project, such as the lodges and commercial use structures, would have the highest potential for noise-related impacts. These noise-generating project components would not be as great under Alternative 2, and this potentially significant impact would therefore be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Population, Housing, and Employment

Induce Population, Housing, and Employment Growth

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the addition of a maximum of 415 residents, 345 housing units, and 43 employees to the project site. The project, as proposed, would increase the allowable density on the project site by 136 percent and result in greater general intensity of use than would be allowed under the current Nevada County General Plan designation. This would be a **less than significant** impact.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 dwelling units, which would result in approximately 176 additional residents on the project site (72 dwelling units x 2.45 persons per household = 176 residents). As residential development under Alternative 2 would not exceed the density allowed under the current Nevada County General Plan designation, the anticipated increase in population under this alternative would not exceed growth already anticipated in the General Plan and other local and regional planning documents based on the county's growth projections. The environmental impacts associated with such growth were analyzed in the Nevada County General Plan Environmental Impact Report, Volume I, SCH #1995102136 (1995). Therefore, this impact would be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project. However, it should be noted that the proposed project would employ up to 43 employees, thus increasing employment opportunities in Nevada County, which currently has an unemployment rate of 11.4 percent. Alternative 2 would not generate new employment opportunities for the county.

Public Services and Utilities

Impacts to Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Implementation of the proposed project will result in the need for additional or expanded fire protection facilities and could result in decreased fire protection service levels. This impact is considered **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences and would thus increase the need for fire protection facilities and could result in decreased fire protection service levels. However, Alternative 2 would only result in 72 dwelling units and 176 additional residents on the project site, in comparison to 345 dwelling units and 415 residents under the proposed project. As such, Alternative 2 would impact fire protection and emergency medical services to a lesser degree than the proposed project. Given the reduction in density, along with the fact that development under Alternative 2 would be required to mitigate impacts by paying fair share funding toward facilities and staffing, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Water Supply and Conveyance Facilities

No timing and enforcement mechanism is currently in place that would ensure the timing related to the design and construction of the project's water distribution system to ensure

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delivery of water to the proposed project. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.13.4.2** establishes the timing of water system improvements and ensures that the project's impacts to water supply and conveyance facilities are **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences, which would require additional water distribution infrastructure both on- and off-site (though reduced water demand). Similar to the proposed project, any development under Alternative 2 would be required to establish a timing mechanism for the design and construction of a water distribution system. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 2 and the proposed project.

Wastewater Treatment Impacts

The Lake of the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) currently serves approximately 2,810 connected, standby, and committed EDUs. Including the proposed project's 280 EDUs, there is a potential for an additional 590 EDUs for planned future projects. The WWTP is currently designed to handle 2,707 EDUs. Therefore, wastewater capacity has been already reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. This impact is therefore considered **potentially significant**. Mitigation measure **MM 3.13.5.1** requires the applicant to fund the project's fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences, which would result in the need for wastewater treatment services from the Lake of the Pines WWTP. As described above, wastewater capacity at the WWTP has been already reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. Therefore, even though Alternative 2 proposes less development and would impact the capacity of the WWTP to a lesser degree than the proposed project, impacts would still be potentially significant given that the capacity of the WWTP is already exceeded. Any development under Alternative 2 would be required to fund its fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 2 than the proposed project.

Solid Waste Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project would generate additional 2,580 daily pounds of solid waste. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.13.6.1**, as well as compliance with AB 939, would reduce solid waste impacts resulting from the project to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project to subscribe to waste collection and recycling services, as well as recycling programs, provided by the County's franchised waste collection company and by requiring the project to provide adequate space for waste and recycling containers.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences, resulting in 176 additional residents on the project site. Using the Nevada County solid waste generation rate of 3.1 pounds per person per day for residential uses, Alternative 2 would generate approximately 545.6 pounds of solid waste per day. This represents a 79 percent reduction from the daily pounds of solid waste generated by the proposed project. Although mitigation measure **MM 3.13.6.1** would reduce project impacts to less than significant, Alternative 2 would generate substantially less solid waste than the proposed project. Therefore,

this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

Traffic and Circulation

Traffic Hazards – Sight Distance and Collisions

Implementation of the proposed project could result in increased hazards associated with sight distance along Rincon Way. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Mitigation measures **MM 3.14.4a** and **MM 3.14.4b** would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project applicant to be responsible for the entire cost of restriping Rincon Way at SR 49 and for reevaluating the sight distance standards if the project will modify the Rincon Way/Connie Court intersection.

Under Alternative 2, the project site would be developed with 72 single-family residences with primary access being provided via Rincon Way, which is wide enough to support traffic generated by Alternative 2. However, Rincon Way is not striped, and the lack of striping could confuse drivers and reduce the capacity of the intersection. In addition, Alternative 2 could require modifications to the Rincon Way/Connie Court intersection similar to the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 2 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under the proposed project and Alternative 2.

Adequate Emergency Access

The proposed project would provide adequate emergency access; however, emergency access via Rodeo Flat Road would not be locked. This impact would be **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.14.5** would clearly identify the gated connection as emergency access and would ensure that the gate would remain closed except during emergencies and would reduce impacts associated with emergency access to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 2, Rincon Way and Rodeo Flat Road would be connected and open to both through traffic and emergency vehicles. No mitigation would be required as the connection would not be gated. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 2 than under the proposed project.

5.4 ALTERNATIVE 3 – REDUCED AND CLUSTERED SITE DEVELOPMENT

CHARACTERISTICS

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with a reduced density, clustered senior development. Development under Alternative 3 would consist of the Village Center and Residential Nursing Care components of the proposed project as well as the residential units located along the western boundary of the site (**Table 5.0-1**) and would be clustered on the northwest portion of the site as shown conceptually in **Figure 5.0-2**. As shown in **Table 5.0-1**, Alternative 3 would result in development of 231 dwelling units on the project site; operation of the Village Center and Residential Nursing Care would also require a total of 43 employees on the site. The Residential Nursing Care component of Alternative 3 would generate approximately 40 persons (40 beds) associated with the hospice units and group home memory care units, 37 persons associated with the lodge nursing care units (21 units x 1.76 persons per unit = 37), 119 persons associated with the Village Center units (98 x 1.21 persons per unit = 119), and 123

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persons associated with the independent living units (102 units x 1.21 persons per unit = 123) for a total of 319 new residents. Similar to the proposed project, primary access would be provided via Rincon Way and secondary emergency-only access would be provided via a connection to Rodeo Flat Road at the northeast corner of the project site. Implementation of Alternative 3 would also require the construction of internal circulation and utility systems including roadways, drainage facilities, and water and wastewater pipeline extensions similar to the proposed project. Alternative 3 would include the trail facilities and agricultural uses included in the proposed project. This alternative would meet the project objectives identified in Section 2.0 (Project Description), but would not provide as many independent living units as the proposed project.

**TABLE 5.0-1
ALTERNATIVE 3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY**

Building Type	Number of Buildings	Number of Units	Unit Size	Building Size (sf)	Parking
Residential Nursing Care					
Hospice	1	4	16 beds	4,570	4
Group House Memory Care	2	6	24 beds	5,226 per building (10,452 total)	6
Lodge Nursing Care	1	21	900	33,000	35 (garage)
Subtotals	4	31	–	–	45
Village Center					
Village Center	5	Total of 98 units for all 5 buildings	Varies	Varies by building type but results in total square footage of 218,000	98 resident and 54 employee/guest spaces
Subtotals	5	98	–	–	152
Residential Independent Living					
Cottages	38	38	1,160–2,000 sf	Varies	38 resident spaces and 12 guest spaces
Duplex	4	8	1,142 sf	2,285	8 resident spaces and 2 guest spaces
4-Plexes	6	24	1,142 sf	4,570	24 resident spaces and 8 guest spaces
Group House (2 Story)	2	4	(6) 424 sf suites/unit	7,430	6 resident spaces and 2 guest spaces
Lodge	2	28	1,460 sf	30,100	70 (garage)
Subtotals	52	102	–	–	170

COMPARATIVE IMPACTS

The following analysis is based on the significant environmental impacts identified in Sections 3.1 through 3.14. The reader is referred to these sections for further details on impacts associated with the proposed project.

Air Quality

Short-Term Construction-Generated Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Construction of the proposed project would generate short-term emissions of criteria air pollutants resulting from site grading and excavation, road paving, motor vehicle exhaust associated with construction equipment and worker trips, and the movement of construction equipment, especially on unpaved surfaces. Emissions of airborne particulate matter are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities. These short-term increases of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) could potentially contribute to existing nonattainment conditions in Nevada County. As a result, short-term increases of ROG and NO_x associated with the project would be considered **potentially significant**. In accordance with NSAQMD Rule 226 and proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.3.1a** through **MM 3.3.1d**, the project would be required to prepare a Dust Suppression Control Plan and an Off-Road Construction Equipment Emission Reduction Plan and employ the use of interior and exterior coatings that contain less than 250 grams of VOC/ROG. The DSCP would be required to identify construction schedules and project phases to be implemented, which would ensure that multiple project phases or construction activities would not occur simultaneously. Based on the proposed project phasing schedules, and with implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. Construction-related emissions of airborne particulate matter are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities. Both the overall density of development and the amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project; Alternative 3 would therefore reduce construction-related increases of ROG and NO_x in comparison to the proposed project. In addition, impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Long-term operation of the proposed project would generate emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (i.e., ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ are projected to exceed the NSAQMD's Level A significance threshold. According to NSAQMD guidance, emissions exceeding the Level A significance threshold would contribute to existing nonattainment conditions and may also interfere with the region's ability to maintain ambient air quality standards if no mitigation is implemented. This impact would be considered **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.3.3** would require preparation of an emissions reduction plan to include NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures. Implementation of NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures would result in substantial reductions in project-generated emissions and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

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Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ associated with operation of this alternative would be substantially less than those associated with operation of the proposed project, given that this alternative represents only a small portion of development proposed under the project. Alternative 3 would therefore generate less traffic and have fewer wood-burning fireplaces than the proposed project. Furthermore, impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project in order to further reduce operational emissions. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Contribution to Cumulative Regional Air Quality Conditions

Long-term operation of the proposed project, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, would contribute to cumulative increases in emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀ that could contribute to future concentrations of ozone and PM₁₀, for which the region is currently designated nonattainment. Increases in project-related emissions, though considered less than significant at the project level, could on a cumulative basis contribute to existing nonattainment conditions. As a result, this impact would be considered **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

Although emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ associated with operation of Alternative 3 would be substantially less than those associated with operation of the proposed project as discussed under “Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants” above, emissions associated with Alternative 3 would still contribute cumulatively to existing nonattainment conditions in the Mountain Counties Air Basin.

Biological Resources

Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on special-status plant species. Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct mortality or the loss of habitat for these species if they are present within the project footprint. The project could result in indirect effects to these species if present in areas surrounding the project footprint through gradual habitat degradation associated with the introduction of non-native plant species and increased human presence. These are **potentially significant** impacts. Impacts could be minimized through implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. The project footprint under Alternative 3, as conceptually shown in **Figure 5.0-2**, would be smaller than under the proposed project, and Alternative 3 would result in less human presence on the site than the proposed project. In addition, impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct and indirect loss of habitat and individuals of endangered, threatened, rare, proposed, or candidate status, and California fully

protected species (special-status species). This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.4.2a** through **MM 3.4.2e** would reduce impacts to listed special-status species to a **less than significant** level by requiring pre-construction surveys, general avoidance and minimization measures, a worker environmental awareness program, and an outdoor illumination plan.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to special-status species under Alternative 3 would be substantially reduced in comparison to the proposed project given the reduced development footprint and human presence under Alternative 3. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Non-Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in impacts to species of special concern, migratory birds protected under the MBTA, and other non-listed special-status species (non-listed special-status species). With the implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.3a** and **MM 3.4.3b**, which require preconstruction surveys, focused surveys, and leaving identified species undisturbed, impacts would be reduced to **less than significant**.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to non-listed special-status species would be substantially reduced in comparison to the proposed project given the reduced development footprint and human presence under Alternative 3. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands

Although a formal wetland delineation has not been conducted, potentially jurisdictional features have been mapped on the project site. All the wetland features mapped on the project site are assumed to be considered jurisdictional by the USACE (including potentially isolated seasonal wetlands). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in the loss of approximately 0.8 acres of jurisdictional waters and wetlands, which is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.4** would reduce impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. to a **less than significant** level by requiring a formal wetland delineation and by the requiring the applicant to ensure that the project will result in no net loss of waters of the U.S. by providing mitigation through impact avoidance, impact minimization, and/or compensatory mitigation for the impact.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. would be substantially reduced in comparison to the proposed project given the reduced development footprint and human presence under Alternative 3. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Protected Landmark Oak Trees and Groves

The project will result in construction within the limits of some areas of landmark oak grove (canopy cover greater than 33 percent). The estimated area of impact of the proposed project on landmark oak groves is approximately 1.35 acre of the total of 39.9 acres of landmark oak groves that occur within the project site. The CEQA Guidelines do not address this resource, but the Nevada County General Plan determined that direct impacts within the limits of such oak

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woodlands constitute a significant impact. Therefore, this is considered to be a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.4.6**, which requires preparation and implementation of a Habitat Management Plan, would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Development of the project site with 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site (**Figure 5.0-2**) under Alternative 3 would result in the removal of fewer landmark oak trees/groves than under the proposed project. Furthermore, impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Impacts to Sensitive Biological Communities

Implementation of the proposed project may result in the disturbance, degradation, and/or removal of other sensitive biological communities, including the indirect degradation of riparian and wetland habitat values due to sedimentation and/or disturbance of wildlife habitat during construction or during project operation. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.6** (Habitat Management Plan), **MM 3.4.2e** (general avoidance and minimization measures), **MM 3.4.4** (mitigation for jurisdictional waters), and **MM 3.4.7** (Habitat Management Plan) would reduce impacts to sensitive habitats to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Impacts to riparian and wetland habitat would be substantially reduced in comparison to the proposed project given the reduced development footprint and human presence under Alternative 3. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Hazardous Wildlife Interactions

Given that most of the trails wind through the undeveloped portions of the site, there is the potential for interactions between trail users and rattlesnakes. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.10** would ensure that trail users would be aware of the precautions necessary to prevent rattlesnake bites. Therefore, impacts would be reduced a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only the Village Center and Residential Nursing Care components of the proposed project, which would consist of 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. It is likely that the residents of these residences would use the existing trails on the site and would be exposed to potential rattlesnake hazards. However, signage as required by mitigation measure **MM 3.4.10** could also be required under Alternative 3. Alternative 3 would expose fewer residents to this hazard would be better than the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

For each future project requiring mitigation, site-specific measures (mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**) would reduce project-level impacts to plant species and their habitats. The incremental impacts of the project, when viewed in connection with effects on biological resources associated with

past, present, and reasonably foreseeable development projects in the region, would be mitigated to **less than cumulatively considerable**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. The overall density of development and ground disturbance under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, resulting in an increase in overall open space on the site. Furthermore, impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, the contribution to cumulative impacts to special-status plant species under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project. Therefore, this significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species and Sensitive Habitats

Development of the project location, in addition to anticipated cumulative development in the project vicinity, would result in disturbance to special-status wildlife species and sensitive habitats throughout the region. These impacts would be considered **cumulatively considerable**. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.1** through **MM 3.4.7** would reduce the project's overall contribution to cumulative biological resource impacts resulting from completion of the project to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species" above. The contribution to cumulative impacts to special-status wildlife species and sensitive habitats under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project. Therefore, this significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

AB 32 Compliance and GHG Emissions

Implementation of the proposed project would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions that would conflict with the goals of AB 32 or result in a significant impact on the environment. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**. The BMPs stipulated under mitigation measure **MM 3.3.1a** in conjunction with mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1a**, which requires submittal of a Construction Recycling Plan (CRP) with the goal of recycling at least 50 percent of construction waste or demolition materials, will reduce construction-based impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** impact. Mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1b**, which requires energy-efficient building measures, in conjunction with state regulations, would reduce emissions. However, the GHG emissions for buildout yield a metric ton per service population ratio would exceed the BAAQMD threshold of 4.6, the proposed project would result in a net increase in cumulative GHG emissions. The proposed project's contribution to GHGs is thus considered **cumulatively considerable** and is a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. This would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions on the project site. Impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project, and any development on the site would at minimum meet the California Building Energy Efficiency Standards. Furthermore, greenhouse gas emissions associated with this alternative would be substantially less than those associated with operation of the proposed project, as development under this alternative represents only a small portion of the proposed project and would therefore generate less traffic, use less electricity and gas, and generate less solid waste. Therefore, this

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potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources

The project site is considered highly sensitive for prehistoric, ethnohistoric, and historic-era cultural resources. Implementation of the proposed project could result in the potential disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric archaeological sites, historical archaeological sites, and isolated artifacts and features) and human remains. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.6.1a** and **MM 3.6.1b** would ensure that any cultural resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in prehistoric or historical archaeology. Therefore, impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. The overall density of development and ground disturbance under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, resulting in decreased potential for disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources. These impacts could be further mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would still be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Impact Unique Paleontological Resources

It is possible that project-related ground-disturbing activities could uncover previously unknown paleontological resources within project boundaries. Unanticipated and accidental paleontological discoveries during project implementation have the potential to affect significant paleontological resources. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.6.2** would ensure that any paleontological resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified paleontologist. Impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources" above. As the overall density of development and ground disturbance under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, and because potential impacts could be further mitigated similar to the proposed project, this potentially significant impact would still be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains

Implementation of the proposed project, along with other cumulative development in Nevada County, could contribute to the cumulative loss and/or disturbance of cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated artifacts and features), and human remains. This contribution could be cumulatively considerable prior to mitigation. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.6.2a** and **MM 3.6.2b**, and adherence to Health and Safety

Code Section 7050.5, PRC Section 5097.98, and CCR Section 15064.5(e), will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the proposed project's contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Under Alternative 3, the overall density of development and ground disturbance would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project. Therefore, Alternative 3 would have reduced potential for disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources in comparison to the proposed project. With mitigation, impacts under Alternative 3 would be further reduced. Therefore, Alternative 3 would contribute to the cumulative loss and/or disturbance of cultural resources to a lesser degree than under the proposed project and this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Paleontological Resources

Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with cumulative development in the surrounding region, would increase the potential to disturb known and undiscovered paleontological resources in the region. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.6.3** will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the project's contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains" above. As the overall density of development and ground disturbance under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project, and because potential impacts could be further mitigated similar to the proposed project, Alternative 3 would contribute to cumulative impacts to paleontological resources to a lesser degree than under the proposed project and this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Human Health

Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project would result in increased population (a maximum of 415 residents in 345 housing units) on the project site and thus would increase exposure of people and structures to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires originating off-site and spreading to the project site. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Compliance with the California Building Standards Code, the defensible space requirements included in the Public Resources Code, and all applicable Nevada County Code requirements would ensure that the proposed project would provide the necessary minimum wildfire protection standards to minimize safety effects of being located in the SRA. However, regardless of these existing regulations, the project site is still located in an area with a high potential to be affected by a wildland fire at some point in the future, and the proposed project would increase population and structures in the area. Mitigation measure MM 3.8.7 mitigates this impact to **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. Similar to the proposed project, all development would be required to comply with the California Building Standards Code, the defensible space requirements included in the Public Resources Code, and all applicable Nevada County Code requirements. Although the overall density of development and population on the project site would be reduced under Alternative 3, additional population and structures would still be introduced into the area. Therefore, this impact would be similar under Alternative 3 and the proposed project.

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Cumulative Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project, in combination with other urban development in the CAL FIRE Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit (NEU Unit) service area, would result in cumulative development of homes and personal property, which makes wildfire suppression more difficult and leads to increased hazards. As such, impacts associated with wildland fire hazards are considered to be **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

Development under Alternative 3 would be reduced in comparison to the proposed project; however, it would still contribute to increased urban development in the NEU Unit service area, which in turn would make wildfire suppression more difficult and lead to increased hazards. Therefore, this significant impact would be similar under Alternative 3 and the proposed project.

Noise

Construction Noise

Construction activities could result in a substantial temporary increase in ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses, which may result in increased levels of annoyance, activity interference, and sleep disruption. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.11.1** would limit construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day, require the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and provide contact information for construction activities and would reduce noise-generating construction activities to **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. Development of these uses would increase in ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses similar to the proposed project. These impacts could also be mitigated similar to the proposed project, by limiting construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day, by requiring the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and by providing contact information for construction activities. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 3 and the proposed project.

Exposure to Non-Transportation Source Noise

Operation of the proposed project, including occupancy of the residential units, would include on-site activities and the operation of stationary equipment that would result in increases in ambient noise levels that could exceed applicable County noise standards at nearby on- and off-site noise-sensitive receptors. Per mitigation measure **MM 3.11.3**, major noise-generating sources, including the proposed sewer pump stations (one proposed and one optional), automotive and tractor repair barns, and building equipment, would be designed to ensure compliance with County noise standards. Proposed residential dwelling units would also be required to comply with California Title 24 noise insulation standards of 45 dBA CNEL for habitable rooms. With mitigation, operational noise levels would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. Several major noise-generating sources, including the sewer pump stations (one proposed and one optional), automotive and tractor repair barns, and building equipment, proposed under the project would not be constructed under Alternative 3. However, under the proposed

project, building mechanical equipment intended to serve larger on-site structures, such as the lodges and commercial use structures, would have the highest potential for noise-related impacts. These project components would still be constructed under Alternative 3. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 3 and the proposed project.

Population, Housing, and Employment

Induce Population, Housing, and Employment Growth

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the addition of a maximum of 415 residents, 345 housing units, and 43 employees to the project site. The project, as proposed, would increase the allowable density on the project site by 136 percent and result in greater general intensity of use than would be allowed under the current Nevada County General Plan designation. This impact is **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units (population of 319 residents) and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. This increase in population is less than the 136 percent increase proposed by the project. Therefore, alternative would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Public Services and Utilities

Impacts to Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Implementation of the proposed project will result in the need for additional or expanded fire protection facilities and could result in decreased fire protection service levels. This impact is considered **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. This would thus increase the need for fire protection facilities for the project site and could result in decreased fire protection service levels. However, Alternative 3 would only result in 231 dwelling units and 319 additional residents on the project site, in comparison to 345 dwelling units and 415 residents under the proposed project. As such, Alternative 3 would impact fire protection and emergency medical services to a lesser degree than the proposed project. Given the reduction in density, along with the fact that development under Alternative 3 would be required to mitigate service impacts by paying fair share funding toward facilities and staffing, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Water Supply and Conveyance Facilities

No timing and enforcement mechanism is currently in place that would ensure the timing related to the design and construction of the project's water distribution system to ensure delivery of water to the proposed project. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.13.4.2** establishes the timing of water system improvements and ensures that the project's impacts to water supply and conveyance facilities are **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project

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site. This would require additional water distribution infrastructure both on- and off-site. Similar to the proposed project, any development under Alternative 3 would be required to establish a timing mechanism for the design and construction of a water distribution system. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 3 and the proposed project.

Wastewater Treatment Impacts

The Lake of the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) currently serves approximately 2,810 connected, standby and committed EDUs. Including the proposed project's 280 EDUs, there is a potential for an additional 590 EDUs for planned future projects. The WWTP is currently designed to handle 2,707 EDUs. Therefore, wastewater capacity has been already been reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. This impact is therefore considered **potentially significant**. Mitigation measure **MM 3.13.5.1** requires the applicant to fund the project's fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services, which would result in the need for wastewater treatment services from the Lake of the Pines WWTP. As described above, wastewater capacity at the WWTP has been already been reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. Therefore, even though Alternative 3 proposes less development and would impact the capacity of the WWTP to a lesser degree than the proposed project, impacts would still be potentially significant given that the capacity of the WWTP is already exceeded. Any development under Alternative 3 would be required to fund its fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP. Alternative 3 would have reduced impacts as compared to the proposed project.

Solid Waste Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project would generate additional 2,580 daily pounds of solid waste. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.13.6.1**, as well as compliance with AB 939, would reduce solid waste impacts resulting from the project to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project to subscribe to waste collection and recycling services, as well as recycling programs, provided by the County's franchised waste collection company and by requiring the project to provide adequate space for waste and recycling containers.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services, resulting in 319 additional residents on the project site. Using the Nevada County solid waste generation rates of 3.1 pounds per person per day for residential uses, Alternative 3 would generate approximately 988.9 pounds of solid waste per day. This represents a 62 percent reduction from the daily pounds of solid waste generated by the proposed project. Although mitigation measure **MM 3.13.6.1** would reduce project impacts to less than significant, Alternative 3 would generate substantially less solid waste than the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 3 than under the proposed project.

Traffic and Circulation

Traffic Hazards – Sight Distance and Collisions

Implementation of the proposed project could result in increased hazards associated with sight distance along Rincon Way. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Mitigation measures **MM 3.14.4a** and **MM 3.14.4b** would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project applicant to be responsible for the entire cost of restriping Rincon Way at SR 49 and for reevaluating the sight distance standards if the project will modify the Rincon Way/Connie Court intersection.

Under Alternative 3, the project site would be developed with only 231 dwelling units and associated community and support services clustered on the northwest portion of the project site. Primary access would be provided via Rincon Way, which is wide enough to support traffic generated by Alternative 3. However, Rincon Way is not striped, and the lack of striping could confuse drivers and reduce the capacity of the intersection. In addition, Alternative 3 could require modifications to the Rincon Way/Connie Court intersection similar to the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 3 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under the proposed project and Alternative 3.

Adequate Emergency Access

The proposed project would provide adequate emergency access; however, emergency access via Rodeo Flat Road would not be locked. This impact would be **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.14.5** would clearly identify the gated connection as emergency access and would ensure that the gate would remain closed except during emergencies and would reduce impacts associated with emergency access to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 3, secondary emergency access would be provided via Rodeo Flat Road similar to the proposed project. Similar mitigation would be required, as the connection between Rodeo Flat Road and the project site would be gated but not locked. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 3 and the proposed project.

5.5 ALTERNATIVE 4 – OFF-SITE ALTERNATIVE

CHARACTERISTICS

Under Alternative 4, the proposed project would be developed on an alternate site in Nevada County. The alternate site consists of 43 acres in the Higgins Area Plan Community Region boundary, located north of the project site along SR 49. The alternate site is shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. The alternate site is bordered by the Higgins Marketplace site to the north. To the south, the alternate site is bordered by mostly undeveloped land with some scattered rural residences. Land to the immediate west of the alternate site, west of SR 49, is currently undeveloped. A commercial complex is located to the southwest. Sierra Storage, a mini-storage facility with multiple buildings, is located northeast of the alternate site, and undeveloped land with dense oak cover abuts the eastern boundary of the site.

The total acreage of the alternate site is 43 acres; however, the western portion of the site adjacent to SR 49 appears to have a large wetland/drainage feature that would likely reduce the extent of developable land on the site. As such, development under Alternative 4 would be

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clustered on a smaller area than under the proposed project and substantial amounts of open space would not be included. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that all of the proposed project components, except the agricultural uses and recreational elements such as trails, open space, river overlook, etc., would be included on the alternate site. Although the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, particularly after avoiding wetland/drainage features as described above, the overall area of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be approximately 38 to 42 acres, which is similar to the 48 acres that would be developed under the proposed project.

Roadway access to the alternate site would be provided via the frontage road along Woodridge Drive as well as Rosewood Road. Implementation of Alternative 4 would also require the construction of internal circulation and utility systems including roadways, drainage facilities, and water and wastewater pipelines. This alternative would project objectives identified in Section 2.0 (Project Description) associated with the provision of a fully operational continuing care retirement community, but would not meet project objectives regarding the provision of open space and indoor/outdoor recreational opportunities.

It should be noted that Nevada County prepared an EIR, the Higgins Marketplace Draft Environmental Impact Report, in 2007 for the Higgins Marketplace site, which is immediately adjacent to the alternate site on the north. Given the close geographic proximity of the sites, the below analysis utilizes information from the Higgins Marketplace EIR to analyze the potential impacts associated with Alternative 4 where appropriate.

COMPARATIVE IMPACTS

The following analysis is based on the significant environmental impacts identified in Sections 3.1 through 3.14. The reader is referred to these sections for further details on impacts associated with the proposed project.

Air Quality

Short-Term Construction-Generated Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Construction of the proposed project would generate short-term emissions of criteria air pollutants resulting from site grading and excavation, road paving, motor vehicle exhaust associated with construction equipment and worker trips, and the movement of construction equipment, especially on unpaved surfaces. Emissions of airborne particulate matter are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities. These short-term increases of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) could potentially contribute to existing nonattainment conditions in Nevada County. As a result, short-term increases of ROG and NO_x associated with the project would be considered **potentially significant**. In accordance with NSAQMD Rule 226 and proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.3.1a** through **MM 3.3.1d**, the project would be required to prepare a Dust Suppression Control Plan and an Off-Road Construction Equipment Emission Reduction Plan and to employ the use of interior and exterior coatings that contain less than 250 grams of VOC/ROG. The DSCP would be required to identify construction schedules and project phases to be implemented, which would ensure that multiple project phases or construction activities would not occur simultaneously. Based on the proposed project phasing schedules, and with implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Although the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, the overall area of ground disturbance under both Alternative 4 (approximately 38 to 42 acres) and the proposed project (48 acres) would be similar. Given that the amount of ground disturbance associated with site preparation activities for Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, Alternative 4 would generate similar short-term increases of ozone-precursor pollutants as the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 4 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants

Long-term operation of the proposed project would generate emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (i.e., ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀. Emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ are projected to exceed the NSAQMD's Level A significance threshold. According to NSAQMD guidance, emissions exceeding the Level A significance threshold would contribute to existing nonattainment conditions and may also interfere with the region's ability to maintain ambient air quality standards if no mitigation is implemented. This impact would be considered **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.3.3** would require preparation of an emissions reduction plan to include NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures. Implementation of NSAQMD-recommended mitigation measures would result in substantial reductions in project-generated emissions and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Given that only the location, and not the density or intensity of use of project components, would change, Alternative 4 would generate the same emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ as the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 4 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Contribution to Cumulative Regional Air Quality Conditions

Long-term operation of the proposed project, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, would contribute to cumulative increases in emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀ that could contribute to future concentrations of ozone and PM₁₀, for which the region is currently designated nonattainment. Increases in project-related emissions, though considered less than significant at the project level, could on a cumulative basis contribute to existing nonattainment conditions. As a result, this impact would be considered **cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable**.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Given that only the location, and not the density or intensity of use of project components, would change, Alternative 4 would generate the same emissions of ROG, NO_x, and PM₁₀ as the proposed project. The alternate site is also located in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, which is currently designated as nonattainment for ozone and PM₁₀. Therefore, although impacts under Alternative 4 would be considered less than significant at the project level, they could on a cumulative basis contribute to existing nonattainment conditions in the Mountain Counties Air Basin. Therefore, this significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

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Biological Resources

Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on special-status plant species. Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct mortality or the loss of habitat for these species if they are present within the project footprint. The project could result in indirect effects to these species if present in areas surrounding the project footprint through gradual habitat degradation associated with the introduction of non-native plant species and increased human presence. These are **potentially significant** impacts. Impacts could be minimized through implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. The alternate site is primarily undeveloped and likely consists of annual grassland, blue oak-foothill pine, blue oak woodland, wetland, and riparian habitats. No critical habitat or occurrences of special-status species have been identified within the alternate site, although special status-species have been identified within 1 mile of the site (Nevada County 2007, Figures 4.9.1 and 4.9-2). In addition, it should be noted that the area surrounding the alternate site is more urbanized than the area surrounding the proposed project site, but there are still large expanses of open space and natural environment surrounding the alternate site. No focused surveys have been conducted on the alternate site, and the actual type, extent, and regulatory status of biological resources on the site are unknown. Although the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, particularly after avoiding any jurisdictional wetland/drainage features as described above, the overall area of ground disturbance under both Alternative 4 (approximately 38 to 42 acres) and the proposed project (48 acres) would be similar. Given that the alternate site is currently undeveloped and the density of development and amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that impacts to biological resources would be similar under both scenarios.

Impacts to Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in direct and indirect loss of habitat and individuals of endangered, threatened, rare, proposed, or candidate status, and California fully protected species (special-status species). This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.4.2a** through **MM 3.4.2f** would reduce impacts to listed special-status species to a **less than significant** level by requiring pre-construction surveys, general avoidance and minimization measures, a worker environmental awareness program, and an outdoor illumination plan.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Given that the alternate site is currently undeveloped and the density of development and amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that impacts to biological resources would be similar under both scenarios.

Impacts to Non-Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species

Implementation of the proposed project could result in impacts to species of special concern, migratory birds protected under the MBTA, and other non-listed special-status species (non-listed special-status species). With the implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.3a** and **MM**

3.4.3b, which require preconstruction surveys, focused surveys, and leaving identified species undisturbed, impacts would be reduced to **less than significant**.

Refer to the discussion under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” above. Given that the alternate site is currently undeveloped and the density of development and amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that impacts to biological resources would be similar under both scenarios.

Impacts to Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands

Although a formal wetland delineation has not been conducted, potentially jurisdictional features have been mapped on the project site. All the wetland features mapped on the project site are assumed to be considered jurisdictional by the USACE (including potentially isolated seasonal wetlands). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in the loss of approximately 0.8 acres of jurisdictional waters and wetlands, which is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.4** would reduce impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. to a **less than significant** level by requiring a formal wetland delineation and by the requiring the applicant to ensure that the project will result in no net loss of waters of the U.S. by providing mitigation through impact avoidance, impact minimization, and/or compensatory mitigation for the impact.

As previously mentioned, the western portion of the alternate site adjacent to SR 49 appears to have a large wetland/drainage feature that would likely reduce the extent of developable land on the site. A formal wetland delineation has not been conducted, but this feature is assumed to be considered jurisdictional by the USACE. Development under Alternative 4 would likely be clustered to avoid impacts to the wetland/drainage feature to the extent feasible, and any impacts could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. However, it is likely that some impact would occur similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Impacts to Protected Landmark Oak Trees and Groves

The project will result in construction within the limits of some areas of landmark oak grove (canopy cover greater than 33 percent). The estimated area of impact of the proposed project on landmark oak groves is approximately 1.35 acre of the total of 39.9 acres of landmark oak groves that occur within the project site. The CEQA Guidelines do not address this resource, but the Nevada County General Plan determined that direct impacts within the limits of such oak woodlands constitute a significant impact. Therefore, this is considered to be a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.4.6**, which requires preparation and implementation of a Habitat Management Plan, would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

The alternate site appears to include several landmark oak trees that may need to be removed to accommodate site development. No focused surveys have been conducted on the alternate site, and the actual number of landmark oaks is unknown. However, the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, particularly after avoiding any jurisdictional wetland/drainage features as described above. As such, there would be less flexibility under Alternative 4 to modify site design to avoid impacts to landmark oaks. Any potential impacts could be mitigated similar to the proposed project; however, it is anticipated that impacts to landmark oaks would be worse under Alternative 4 than under the proposed project.

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Impacts to Sensitive Biological Communities

Implementation of the proposed project may result in the disturbance, degradation, and/or removal of other sensitive biological communities, including the indirect degradation of riparian and wetland habitat values due to sedimentation and/or disturbance of wildlife habitat during construction or during project operation. This is a potentially significant impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.6** (Habitat Management Plan), **MM 3.4.2e** (general avoidance and minimization measures), **MM 3.4.4** (mitigation for jurisdictional waters), and **MM 3.4.7** (Habitat Management Plan) would reduce impacts to sensitive habitats to a **less than significant** level.

Refer to the discussions under “Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species” and “Impacts to Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands” above. Given that the alternate site is currently undeveloped and the density of development and amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that impacts to biological resources would be similar under both scenarios.

Hazardous Wildlife Interactions

Given that most of the trails wind through the undeveloped portions of the site, there is the potential for interactions between trail users and rattlesnakes. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.4.10** would ensure that trail users would be aware of the precautions necessary to prevent rattlesnake bites. Therefore, impacts would be reduced a **less than significant** level.

Most rattlesnakes forage for prey in or near brushy or tall grass areas, rock outcrops, rodent burrows, around and under surface objects, and sometimes in the open. Given that the majority of the alternate site would be developed with urban uses under Alternative 4, it is unlikely that large numbers of rattlesnakes would forage or seek cover within the alternate site. Furthermore, trails would not be provided on the project site under Alternative 4. Therefore, rattlesnake hazards under Alternative 4 would be better than those under the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species

For each future project requiring mitigation, site-specific measures (mitigation measure **MM 3.4.1**) would reduce project-level impacts to plant species and their habitats. However, the incremental impacts of the project, when viewed in connection with effects on biological resources associated with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable development projects in the region, would be mitigated to **less than cumulatively considerable**.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Although the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, the overall area of ground disturbance under both Alternative 4 (approximately 38 to 42 acres) and the proposed project (48 acres) would be similar. Therefore, it is anticipated that development under Alternative 4 would have similar contributions to this significant impact as the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species and Sensitive Habitats

Development of the project location, in addition to anticipated cumulative development in the project vicinity, would result in disturbance to special-status wildlife species and sensitive habitats

throughout the region. These impacts would be considered **cumulatively considerable**. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.4.1** through **MM 3.4.7** would reduce the project's overall contribution to cumulative biological resource impacts resulting from completion of the project to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species" above. Given that the alternate site is currently undeveloped and the density of development and amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that development under Alternative 4 would have similar contributions to this significant impact as the proposed project.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

AB 32 Compliance and GHG Emissions

Implementation of the proposed project would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions that would conflict with the goals of AB 32 or result in a significant impact on the environment. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**. The BMPs stipulated under mitigation measure **MM 3.3.1a** in conjunction with mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1a**, which requires submittal of a Construction Recycling Plan (CRP) with the goal of recycling at least 50 percent of construction waste or demolition materials, will reduce construction-based impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** impact. Mitigation measure **MM 3.5.1b**, which requires energy-efficient building measures, in conjunction with state regulations, would reduce emissions by 680 metric tons of GHG per year. However, the GHG emissions for buildout yield a metric ton per service population ratio of 8.85 for buildout conditions. As this exceeds the BAAQMD threshold of 4.6, the proposed project would result in a net increase in cumulative GHG emissions. The proposed project's contribution to GHGs is thus considered **cumulatively considerable** and is a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**, which would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions on the alternate site. However, this alternative would generate the same amount of traffic (though vehicle miles traveled would likely be less than the proposed project given its proximity to commercial uses), use the same amount of electricity and gas, and generate the same amount of solid waste as the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 4 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project, and any development on the site would at minimum meet the California Building Energy Efficiency Standards. Therefore, development under Alternative 4 would result in similar GHG emissions, and this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Cultural Resources

Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources

The project site is considered highly sensitive for prehistoric, ethnohistoric, and historic-era cultural resources. Implementation of the proposed project could result in the potential disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric archaeological sites, historical archaeological sites, and isolated artifacts and features) and human remains. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 3.6.1a** and **MM 3.6.1b** would ensure that any cultural resources inadvertently discovered during project

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construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in prehistoric or historical archaeology. Therefore, impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Archaeological and historical investigations for the area surrounding the Higgins Marketplace site, which includes the alternate site, did not identify any cultural resources in the area (Nevada County 2007, p. 4.10-15). However, under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Although the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, the overall area of ground disturbance under both Alternative 4 (approximately 38 to 42 acres) and the proposed project (48 acres) would be similar. Therefore, development of the alternate site could result in the potential disturbance of currently undiscovered cultural resources. This impact could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Given that the amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, and impacts could be similarly mitigated under both scenarios, it is anticipated that this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Impact Unique Paleontological Resources

It is possible that project-related ground-disturbing activities could uncover previously unknown paleontological resources within project boundaries. Unanticipated and accidental paleontological discoveries during project implementation have the potential to affect significant paleontological resources. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.6.2** would ensure that any paleontological resources inadvertently discovered during project construction activities would be protected consistent with the recommendations of a qualified paleontologist. Impacts would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Archaeological and historical investigations for the area surrounding the Higgins Marketplace site, which includes the alternate site, did not identify any evidence of paleontological resources (Nevada County 2007, p. 4.10-16). However, under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Although the alternate site would be required to accommodate proposed project components on a smaller area than the proposed project site, the overall area of ground disturbance under both Alternative 4 (approximately 38 to 42 acres) and the proposed project (48 acres) would be similar. Therefore, development of the alternate site could result in unanticipated and accidental paleontological discoveries. This impact could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Given that the amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, and impacts could be similarly mitigated under both scenarios, it is anticipated that this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains

Implementation of the proposed project, along with other cumulative development in Nevada County, could contribute to the cumulative loss and/or disturbance of cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated artifacts and features), and human remains. This contribution could be cumulatively considerable prior to mitigation. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.6.2a** and **MM 3.6.2b**, and adherence to Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, PRC Section 5097.98, and CCR Section 15064.5(e), will ensure that any

discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the proposed project's contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources" above. Given that the amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that development under Alternative 4 would have similar contributions to this significant impact as the proposed project.

Cumulative Impacts to Paleontological Resources

Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with cumulative development in the surrounding region, would increase the potential to disturb known and undiscovered paleontological resources in the region. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.6.3** will ensure that any discoveries will be handled in accordance with state law and reduce the project's contribution to these impacts to a **less than cumulatively considerable** level.

Refer to the discussion under "Impact Unique Paleontological Resources" above. Given that the amount of ground disturbance under Alternative 4 would be largely similar to the proposed project, it is anticipated that development under Alternative 4 would have similar contributions to this significant impact as the proposed project.

Hazardous Materials/Human Health

Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project would result in increased population (a maximum of 415 residents in 345 housing units) on the project site and thus would increase exposure of people and structures to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires originating off-site and spreading to the project site. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Compliance with the California Building Standards Code, the defensible space requirements included in the Public Resources Code, and all applicable Nevada County Code requirements would ensure that the proposed project would provide the necessary minimum wildfire protection standards to minimize safety effects of being located in the SRA. However, regardless of these existing regulations, the project site is still located in an area with a high potential to be affected by a wildland fire at some point in the future, and the proposed project would increase population and structures in the area. As such, there is no feasible way to avoid all significant hazards associated with wildland fire. This impact is thus considered to be **significant and unavoidable**.

The alternate site proposed for development under Alternative 4 is located within the SRA and is in a moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE 2007). In comparison, the proposed project site is located in a high and very high Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Furthermore, it should be noted that the area surrounding the alternate site is more urbanized than the area surrounding the proposed project site. Therefore, although population and structures would increase under both scenarios, development of the project components on the alternate site would result in less hazardous conditions related to wildland fires. Therefore, this significant impact would be better under Alternative 4 than under the proposed project.

Cumulative Wildland Fire Hazards

The proposed project, in combination with other urban development in the CAL FIRE Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit (NEU Unit) service area, would result in cumulative development of homes and

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personal property, which makes wildfire suppression more difficult and leads to increased hazards. As such, impacts associated with wildland fire hazards are considered to be **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

Alternative 4 would also increase development in the NEU Unit service area. However, the alternate site proposed for development under Alternative 4 is in a more urbanized area than the proposed project. The alternative site is also in a lesser Fire Hazard Severity Zone than the proposed project. Therefore, development under Alternative 4 would contribute to this significant impact to a lesser degree than the proposed project, and the impact would be better under Alternative 4.

Noise

Construction Noise

Construction activities could result in a substantial temporary increase in ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses, which may result in increased levels of annoyance, activity interference, and sleep disruption. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measures **MM 3.11.1** would limit construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day, require the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and provide contact information for construction activities and would reduce noise-generating construction activities to **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Development of the alternate site would increase ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive land uses similar to the proposed project, including rural residences to the south and east. These impacts could also be mitigated similar to the proposed project, by limiting construction activities to the less noise-sensitive periods of the day, by requiring the use of manufacturer-recommended noise control devices, and by providing contact information for construction activities. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Exposure to Non-Transportation Source Noise

Operation of the proposed project, including occupancy of the residential units, would include on-site activities and the operation of stationary equipment that would result in increases in ambient noise levels that could exceed applicable County noise standards at nearby on- and off-site noise-sensitive receptors. Per proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.11.3**, major noise-generating sources, including the proposed sewer pump stations (one proposed and one optional), automotive and tractor repair barns, and building equipment, would be designed to ensure compliance with County noise standards. Proposed residential dwelling units would also be required to comply with California Title 24 noise insulation standards of 45 dBA CNEL for habitable rooms. With mitigation, operational noise levels would be reduced to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except the agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Several major noise-generating sources, including the automotive and tractor repair barns and recreational elements, proposed under the project would not be constructed under Alternative 4. However, under the proposed project, building mechanical equipment intended to serve larger on-site structures, such as the lodges and commercial use structures, would have the

highest potential for noise-related impacts. These project components would still be constructed under Alternative 4. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Exposure to Transportation Source Noise

While not an impact of associated with the proposed project, the Alternative 4 site would be exposed to traffic noise from SR 49, with the existing 65 dBA noise contour located 224 feet (288 feet under year 2030 conditions) on the site from the roadway centerline of SR 49 (Nevada County 2007).

Population, Housing, and Employment

Induce Population, Housing, and Employment Growth

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the addition of a maximum of 415 residents, 345 housing units, and 43 employees to the project site. The project, as proposed, would increase the allowable density on the project site by 136 percent and result in greater general intensity of use than would be allowed under the current Nevada County General Plan designation.

Implementation of Alternative 4 would result in the addition of a maximum of 415 residents, 345 housing units, and 43 employees to the alternate site, which is currently designated Residential by the Nevada County General Plan and zoned RA-1.5 by the Nevada County Zoning Ordinance. The RA-1.5 zone allows for the development of single-family dwelling units at densities equivalent to 1.5-acre minimum parcel size. The alternate site is 43 acres, which could accommodate up to 28 dwelling units (43 acres/1.5 acre lots = 28 lots) and 68 additional residents (28 dwelling units x 2.45 persons per household = 68) under the site's existing zoning. Therefore, development of the project components would represent a 510 percent increase in the allowable density on the site than would be allowed under the zoning. This is more than the 136 percent increase proposed by the project. Therefore, even though the population and housing units resulting under both scenarios would be the same, Alternative 4 would exceed anticipated growth on the alternate site to a greater degree than the proposed project would exceed growth anticipated on the proposed project site. Therefore, this significant impact would be worse under Alternative 4 than under the proposed project.

Public Services and Utilities

Impacts to Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Implementation of the proposed project will result in the need for additional or expanded fire protection facilities and could result in decreased fire protection service levels. This impact is considered **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Given that only the location, and not the density or intensity of use, would change, Alternative 4 would result in the same need for additional or expanded fire protection facilities as the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 4 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

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Water Supply and Conveyance Facilities

No timing and enforcement mechanism is currently in place that would ensure the timing related to the design and construction of the project's water distribution system to ensure delivery of water to the proposed project. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM 3.13.4.2** establishes the timing of water system improvements and ensures that the project's impacts to water supply and conveyance facilities are **less than significant**.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. This would require additional water distribution infrastructure both on- and off-site. Similar to the proposed project, any development under Alternative 4 would be required to establish a timing mechanism for the design and construction of a water distribution system. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Wastewater Treatment Impacts

The Lake of the Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) currently serves approximately 2,810 connected, standby and committed EDUs. Including the proposed project's 280 EDUs, there is a potential for an additional 590 EDUs for planned future projects. The WWTP is currently designed to handle 2,707 EDUs. Therefore, wastewater capacity has been already reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. This impact is therefore considered **potentially significant**. Mitigation measure **MM 3.13.5.1** requires the applicant to fund the project's fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP and would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site, which would result in the same need for wastewater treatment services from the Lake of the Pines WWTP as the proposed project. As described above, wastewater capacity at the WWTP has been already reached and all new development would require modifications at the plant to be adequately served. Any development under Alternative 4 would be required to fund its fair share of addition of membranes at the Lake of the Pines WWTP. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Solid Waste Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project would generate additional 2,580 daily pounds of solid waste. This impact is considered **potentially significant**. Implementation of proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.13.6.1**, as well as compliance with AB 939, would reduce solid waste impacts resulting from the project to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project to subscribe to waste collection and recycling services, as well as recycling programs, provided by the County's franchised waste collection company and by requiring the project to provide adequate space for waste and recycling containers.

Under Alternative 4, all proposed project components except agricultural uses and some recreational elements would be located on an alternate site as shown in **Figure 5.0-3**. Given that only the location, and not the density or intensity of use, would change, Alternative 4 would generate the same daily pounds of solid waste as the proposed project. Impacts under Alternative 4 could be mitigated similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be similar under Alternative 4 and the proposed project.

Traffic and Circulation

Traffic Hazards – Sight Distance and Collisions

Implementation of the proposed project could result in increased hazards associated with sight distance along Rincon Way. This is a **potentially significant** impact. Mitigation measures **MM 3.14.4a** and **MM 3.14.4b** would reduce impacts to a **less than significant** level by requiring the project applicant to be responsible for the entire cost of restriping Rincon Way at SR 49 and for reevaluating the sight distance standards if the project will modify the Rincon Way/Connie Court intersection.

Under Alternative 4, primary access to the alternate site would be provided via the frontage road along Woodridge Drive as well as Rosewood Road. Therefore, Alternative 4 would avoid the increased hazards associated with sight distance along Rincon Way that would occur under the proposed project. This potentially significant impact would be better under Alternative 4 than under the proposed project.

Adequate Emergency Access

The proposed project would provide adequate emergency access; however, emergency access via Rodeo Flat Road would not be locked. This impact would be **potentially significant**. Proposed mitigation measure **MM 3.14.5** would clearly identify the gated connection as emergency access and would ensure that the gate would remain closed except during emergencies and would impacts associated with emergency access to a **less than significant** level.

Under Alternative 4, emergency access to the alternate site would be provided via the frontage road along Woodridge Drive. Given that the alternate site fronts onto SR 49, the project's emergency access issues associated with gated access to Rodeo Flat Road would not occur under Alternative 4. Therefore, this potentially significant impact would be better than under the proposed project.

Traffic Operation Impacts

While the proposed project would not result in any traffic operational impacts in regard to level of service, Alternative 4 would add traffic (969 new daily vehicle trips) to key Higgins Area intersections (SR 49/Combie Road/Wolf Road, Combie Road/Higgins Road, and SR 49/Woodbridge Court) that may adversely impact their operation.

5.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

5.6 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Table 5.0-2 provides a summary of the potential impacts of the alternatives evaluated in this section, as compared with the potential impacts of the proposed project.

**TABLE 5.0-2
COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

Issue	Alternative 1 No Project	Alternative 2 Rural Estate Development	Alternative 3 Reduced and Clustered Site Development	Alternative 4 Off-Site Alternative
Air Quality				
Short-Term Construction-Generated Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants	B	W	B	S
Long-Term Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants	B	B	B	S
Contribution to Cumulative Regional Air Quality Conditions	B	B	B	S
Biological Resources				
Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species	B	W	B	S
Impacts to Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species	B	W	B	S
Impacts to Non-Listed Special-Status Wildlife Species	B	W	B	S
Impacts to Potential Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands	B	W	B	S
Impacts to Protected Landmark Oak Trees and Groves	B	W	B	W
Impacts to Sensitive Biological Communities	B	W	B	S
Hazardous Wildlife Interactions	B	B	B	B
Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species	B	W	B	S
Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species and Sensitive Habitats	B	W	B	S
Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases				
AB 32 Compliance and GHG Emissions	B	B	B	S
Cultural and Paleontological Resources				
Potential Destruction or Damage to Known and Undiscovered Historic and Archaeological Resources	B	W	B	S
Impact Unique Paleontological Resources	B	W	B	S
Cumulative Impacts to Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains	B	W	B	S
Cumulative Impacts to Paleontological Resources	B	W	B	S
Hazardous Materials/Human Health				
Wildland Fire Hazards	B	S	S	B
Cumulative Wildland Fire Hazards	B	S	S	B

5.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

Issue	Alternative 1 No Project	Alternative 2 Rural Estate Development	Alternative 3 Reduced and Clustered Site Development	Alternative 4 Off-Site Alternative
Noise				
Construction Noise	B	S	S	S
Exposure to Non-Transportation Source Noise	B	B	B	S
Population, Housing, and Employment				
Induce Population, Housing, and Employment Growth	B	B	B	W
Public Services and Utilities				
Impacts to Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services	B	B	B	S
Water Supply and Conveyance Facilities	B	B	B	S
Wastewater Treatment Impacts	B	S	S	S
Solid Waste Impacts	B	B	B	S
Traffic and Circulation				
Traffic Hazards – Sight Distance and Collisions	B	S	B	B
Adequate Emergency Access	W	S	S	B

B – Impacts better than those under proposed project

S – Impacts the same as those under proposed project, or no better or worse

W – Impacts worse than those under proposed project

Based upon the evaluation described in this section, the No Project Alternative (Alternative 1) is considered to be the environmentally superior alternative. The No Project Alternative was determined to have less adverse environmental impacts than the proposed project. However, the No Project Alternative would not meet any of the objectives of the proposed project.

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15125.6(e)(2), if the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, another environmentally superior alternative must be identified. For this analysis, after the No Project Alternative, Alternative 3 is considered the environmentally superior alternative. Implementation of this alternative would reduce 23 impacts. This alternative would meet the project objectives identified in Section 2.0 (Project Description), but would not provide as many independent living units as the proposed project.

5.0 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

REFERENCES

CAL FIRE (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection). 2007. *Nevada County Fire Hazard Severity Zones in SRA*.

Nevada County. 2007. *Higgins Marketplace Draft Environmental Impact Report*.